

# **Florida Music Education Association 2019 All-State Music Conference**

## **"Reading and Playing Guitar Out of Open Position"**



*Presenter:*

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***“The approach to what you do,  
results in what you get...”***

**Freddie Gruber (1927-2011) – Drummer and Master Teacher**

Regardless of style, one challenge young guitarists face is making the jump from playing in open position (also called 1<sup>st</sup> position using open strings through the first four frets) to playing in alternate positions. Students need to demonstrate proficiency reading/performing with these open position items:

- first position scales in C, F (two octaves), Bb, G (two octaves), D, A (two octaves), and in E (two octaves)
- performing simple melodies using natural and enharmonic notes in 1<sup>st</sup> (Open Position)

Once students are comfortable with the above items, they are ready to tackle reading in different positions on the guitar.

Below are several exercises and resources to aide in developing reading and technical proficiency in playing out of open position.

**C Major Scale** – This scale is one that can be practiced in a variety of positions (fixed and moveable) on the guitar. Through practice, students will develop better reading ability in different guitar positions.

For the one octave C major scale, **Example 1** below shows the open/1<sup>st</sup> position form, beginning on the A string, third fret along with proper L.H. finger use.

### ***C Major Scale (Open Position)***

The musical notation for the C Major Scale in Open Position is shown in 4/4 time. The treble clef is used. The scale is written in a single line, starting on the A string (third fret) and ending on the A string (open). The left hand (L.H.) fingering is indicated by numbers 1-3 below the notes. The right hand (R.H.) fingering is indicated by numbers 1-3 above the notes. The scale is divided into four measures, each containing four notes. The notes are: C (3rd fret, A string), D (4th fret, A string), E (5th fret, A string), F (5th fret, D string), G (4th fret, D string), A (3rd fret, D string), B (2nd fret, D string), and C (open, D string).

**L.H. fingering**

Measure	1	2	3	4
Notes	C, D, E, F	G, A, B, C	C, B, A, G	F, E, D, C
L.H. Fingering	3, 0, 2, 3	0, 2, 0, 1	0, 2, 0, 3	2, 0, 3
R.H. Fingering	3, 0, 2, 3	0, 2, 0, 1	0, 2, 0, 3	2, 0, 3

**Example 2** uses the same notes of the C scale but using a different finger, fret combination and using only three strings.

### *C Major Scale (2<sup>nd</sup> Position)*

Handwritten musical notation for the C Major Scale in 2<sup>nd</sup> position. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The scale is written on a single staff, showing the notes C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, and C6. Below the staff, the left-hand fingering is indicated: 2, 4, 1, 2, 4, 1, 3, 4, 3, 1, 4, 2, 1, 4, 2. The text "L.H. fingering" is written below the first few notes. The notation is enclosed in a large bracket on the left side.

**Example 3** begins on the low E string, eighth fret, yet uses the same fingerings as **Example 2** with only the bass strings.

### *C Major Scale (7<sup>th</sup> Position)*

Handwritten musical notation for the C Major Scale in 7<sup>th</sup> position. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The scale is written on a single staff, showing the notes C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, and C6. Below the staff, the left-hand fingering is indicated: 2, 4, 1, 2, 4, 1, 3, 4, 3, 1, 4, 2, 1, 4, 2. The text "L.H. fingering" is written below the first few notes. The notation is enclosed in a large bracket on the left side.

If students know the natural and enharmonic notes on the E and A strings, they can play **ANY** one octave major scale starting on the E or A bass strings and using the finger pattern from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> position C Major Scales.

**Example 4** begins on the low E string (7<sup>th</sup> position); the next uses the Segovia Style finger shift.

## 2 octave C Major Scale (7<sup>th</sup> Position)

2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4 1 3 4 2 4 1 2 1 4 2 4 3 1 4 3 1 4 2 1 4 2

*L.H. fingering*

T 8 10 7 8 10 7 9 10 7 9 10 8 10 7 8 7 10 8 10 9 7 10 9 7 10 8 7 10 8

A

B

## 2 octave Segovia Scale (finger shifts)

shift 1st finger to V shift 3rd finger to IV

2 4 1 2 4 1 3 1 3 1 2 4 1 3 4 3 1 4 2 1 3 1 3 1 4 2 1 4 2

*L.H. fingering*

T 3 5 2 3 5 2 4 5 7 5 6 8 5 7 8 7 5 8 6 5 7 5 4 2 5 3 2 5 3

A

B

**Example 5** The A Natural Notes Scale (5<sup>th</sup> position) – Practicing this scale will help facilitate learning all natural notes in 5<sup>th</sup> position.

## A Natural Notes Scale (5<sup>th</sup> Position)

1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 1 2 4 1 3

*L.H. fingering*

4 2 1 4 2 1 3 1 4 3 1 4 3 1 4 3 1

**Example 6a** is from No. 14 “The Shift” from Branford Werner’s **20 Favorite Exercises for Classical Guitar** and may be purchased here at: [thisisclassicalguitar.com](http://thisisclassicalguitar.com)

This is a great manual in developing reading and technique for beginner to intermediate guitar students!

This exercise help students find different notes of “C, Db, D and Eb” on various points on the neck. It facilitates hand/finger/eye coordination and teaches students how to “track” on the fret board. To play:

- You use your L.H. 1<sup>st</sup> finger only for the first measure.
- In the second, and subsequent measures, add the L.H. 2<sup>nd</sup> finger, 3<sup>rd</sup> finger, 4<sup>th</sup> finger, while you lock your other fingers to “guide” where you shift. Your fingers will be connected and will move together.

Example 6a is a musical exercise in 4/4 time. The notation consists of a treble clef staff and a guitar-specific staff with strings T, A, and B. The treble staff shows a sequence of notes: C4 (open), Db4 (1st fret), D4 (2nd fret), Eb4 (3rd fret), and then a series of eighth notes moving up and down the scale. Above the first four notes are fingerings: 2, 3, 5, 3. The word "simile...." is written above the staff. The guitar staff shows fret numbers for each note: 1, 5, 5, 2, 6, 6, 3, 7, 7, 4, 8, 8, 3, 7, 7, 2, 6, 6, 1, 5, 5. The exercise ends with a double bar line.

**Example 6b** - I expanded it further, adding more notes to “The Shift”. Instead of three “root” notes I have four. You can also train your students to begin on different “root” notes on the guitar, using the same finger pattern.

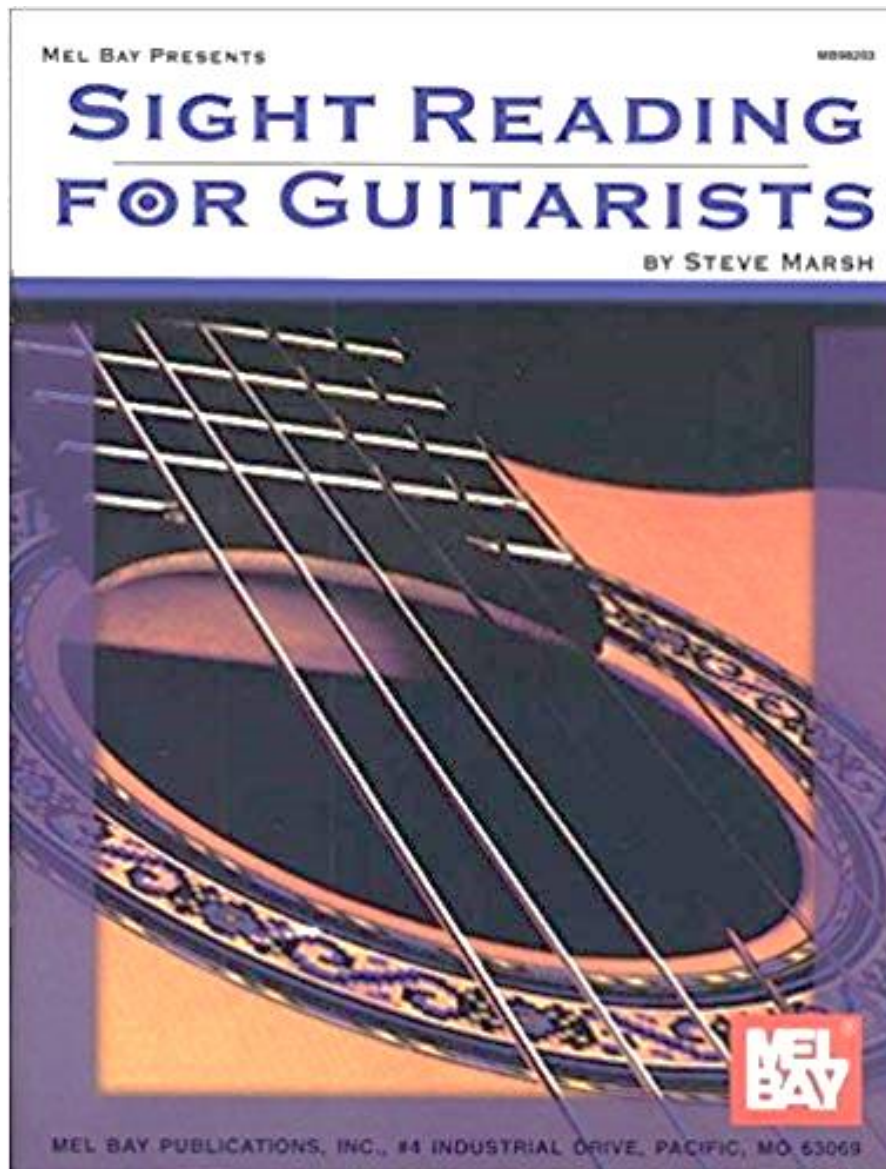
Example 6b is an expanded version of the exercise, in 6/4 time. It consists of two systems of notation. The first system starts at measure 8 and includes a treble staff, a guitar staff, and a bass staff. The treble staff has notes C4, Db4, D4, Eb4, and then a series of eighth notes. Fingerings 2, 3, 5, 6, 5, 3 are shown above the first six notes, followed by "simile....". The guitar staff shows fret numbers: 1, 5, 5, 2, 6, 6, 3, 7, 7, 4, 8, 8, 3, 7, 7, 2, 6, 6, 1, 5, 5. The bass staff shows fret numbers: 3, 8, 3, 4, 9, 4, 5, 10, 5. The second system starts at measure 11 and continues the exercise with similar notation and fret numbers.

In addition to Branford Werner's **20 Favorite Exercises for Classical Guitar** warm-up manual, I have also found that using the resources below will aide in student's reading and technical development in open positions and beyond.

**Sight Reading for Guitarists** by Steve Marsh, Mel Bay:

- [www.melbay.com](http://www.melbay.com)
- <https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/sight-reading-for-guitarists-digital-sheet-music/19900585>
- <https://www.amazon.com/Mel-Bay-Sight-Reading-Guitarists/dp/0786647965>

Aside from reading in 1<sup>st</sup> position, most exercises may be practiced and played in alternate positions.



**FJH Guitar Skill Sheets** (set of five each sold separately): by Phillip Groeber/Edited by Leo Welch, David Hoge, and Hugh Chandler

FJH Music Publications - <http://www.fjhmusic.com/guitar/skill.htm>

- **No. 1 - First Position Major Scales**
- **No. 2 - First Position Minor Scales**
- **No. 3 - Movable Position Major Scales**
- **No. 4 - Movable Position Minor Scales**
- **No. 5 - Chords and Arpeggios**



Ultimately, the only way one gets better in reading music is to practice it every day! Sight-read every day. Continually read new music. By working on this skill and learning to use more of the fret board, more music will be available for you and your students to enjoy!

Thank you for attending today's session! If you have more questions,  
please contact:

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